



Carl Vinson VA Medical Center

Vinson Voice

August 2015

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Cover photo: The Touchton Bench

To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan . . .

President Abraham Lincoln, 2nd Inaugural Address

Mission . . . To improve the health status of Veterans . . .

Vision . . . To be the provider of choice for Veterans . . .





In Memoriam
Dr. Deborah Touchton

Lunch with Joe and Memories of Pork Chop Hill

Amanda Sproul

Decorated combat Vietnam Veteran Jim Ross, 3rd Squadron, 4th U.S. Cavalry (attached to the 25th ID) B-Troop '67-'68, recently met some living Korean War history in the form of Lt. Joe Clemons, who was portrayed in the Hollywood classic film "Pork Chop Hill."

In 1959, Ross became a big fan of the men who served on Pork Chop Hill in Korea in 1953 just before the armistice. Ross and his brother walked six miles to a local theatre in their childhood town to watch the movie named after the battle, starring Gregory Peck as 1st Lt. Joe Clemons. Though he remembers the movie fondly, times have changed, and Ross now follows Lt. Clemons Facebook page named "Pork Chop Hill 255."



One day in a combat Veterans group on Facebook, there was a discussion amongst the members about their favorite war movies. Of course, Ross identified his as Pork Chop Hill. Robert Smith, who was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam and was participating in the discussion, replied and said "I know Joe Clemons!" He told Clemons what a fan Ross was and that he hoped to meet Clemons. To Ross' delight, the famous Korean War hero obliged by suggesting that Ross give him a call. Ross admitted being a little nervous about making the call, but, as it turned out, the famous soldier spoke softly and advised Jim to "just call me Joe!" During the course of the memorable phone call, they arranged a lunch meeting for April.

Ross, Smith, and their wives joined Clemons for what would prove a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a trip back into time. When Jim walked into the restaurant and saw Clemons, he was ecstatic at the prospect of sitting beside a military legend and a national hero, and his enthusiasm was repaid with an unforgettable memory of the renowned war hero.

During lunch, Clemons told Ross that he was the technical advisor on the original movie, having taken a six-month leave of absence from the 101st Airborne to do it. He also told Ross that he commanded three battalions of the 198th Infantry in Vietnam, and that one of his battalion commanders was Lt. Col. Norman Schwarzkopf, who would later be known as "Stormin' Norman" of Desert Storm fame. Clemons assured Ross that he had trained the General well. During their meeting, Ross shared a few combat accounts of his own and presented Clemons with souvenirs from his own unit including a 4th Cavalry patch, a printout of the history of the 4th and the battle of Tan Son Nhut, as well as a summary of his hero, General Otis. Clemons, pleased with the gifts, said that he would read every word and would treasure the items. Ross says it was one of the most memorable days of his life. •



Facts About Lt. Clemons

- Clemons' brother-in-law—portrayed by Rip Torn in the movie—was on Pork Chop Hill with him and is still living.
- Ross is friends with Corey King, the son of Capt. Monroe King, who relieved Lt. Clemons on Pork Chop and was shot three times. Monroe passed away from a heart attack on his way to serve in Vietnam and is buried at Arlington.
- General Otis (who commanded Jim in Vietnam) and Joe Clemons are both distinguished graduates of West Point, graduating two years apart. The Colonel in 1951 and the General in 1953.
- Ross asked Clemons if he ate raisins as often as portrayed in the movie and Clemons confirmed that he did not. Peck's wife suggested the raisins as a substitute for cigarettes.
- Clemons lives just 15 miles from where Ross first saw the movie 56 years ago.

10 Things to Know About the Choice Program

Hans Petersen

The Veterans Choice Program is a new, temporary benefit that allows eligible Veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility.

1: Am I eligible for the Choice Program?

You must have been enrolled in VA health care on or before August 1, 2014, or be eligible to enroll as a recently discharged combat Veteran. You must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- You are told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days for an appointment from the date clinically determined by your physician, or, if not such date is provided, our preferred date.
- Your residence is more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility. You need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home. You face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, or a medical condition. Staff at your local VA medical facility will work with you to determine if you are eligible for any of these reasons.
- You reside in a State or a United States Territory without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services and surgical care, and reside more than 20 miles from such a VA medical facility. Note: This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also note that some Veterans in New Hampshire reside within 20 miles of White River Junction VAMC.

2: What do I do if I think I am eligible?

Call the Choice Program Call Center at 866-606-8198 to verify your eligibility and set up an appointment.

3: Can I call my non-VA doctor to make an appointment?

No, please call the Choice Program call center at 866-606-8198 to verify eligibility and set up an appointment.

4: How is the 40 mile calculation made?

This calculation is based on the distance from your permanent residence (or an active temporary address) to the closest VA facility, including Community-Based Outpatient Clinics and VA Medical Centers. Does the 40 mile rule refer to whether the specialty need (for example, Orthopedic Surgery) is available within 40 miles, or 40 miles from any VA facility, whether or not the specialty, in this example Orthopedics, is available there? The law is clear that eligibility must be based on the distance from the Veteran's residence to any VA medical facility, even if that facility does not offer the specific medical service the Veteran requires for that particular visit.

5: If I am eligible for the Choice Program, can I receive Beneficiary Travel for travel to appointments with a Choice provider?

Yes, the Choice Act does provide the ability to pay for travel to the Choice preferred provider for Veterans who are eligible for Beneficiary Travel. However, the Choice Act did not provide any new Beneficiary Travel eligibility.

6: I didn't get my Choice Card, what do I do?

You do not need your Choice Card to access the Choice Program. If you didn't receive a Choice Card, simply call 866-606-8198 to find out if you are eligible and to make an appointment.

7: How do I get my prescription filled if I use the Choice Program?

The Choice Program non-VA Provider will issue a prescription with up to a 14 day supply of a National Formulary drug. You may have the 14 day supply prescription filled at any non-VA pharmacy of your choosing and may submit a request for reimbursement to VA. For prescriptions needed past 14 days, please follow standard procedures to fill a prescription at the VA pharmacy.

8: If I use the Choice Program, does that affect my VA health care?

No, not at all. You do not have to choose between the two—the Choice Program is here to make it easier to access the care you need, close to home.

9: Am I responsible for Medicare, Medicaid or TRICARE cost-shares?

No, these plans are not considered Other Health Insurance for purposes of the Choice Program. You will not be billed for any of the cost-shares associated with these plans.

10: What about VA copayments?

Will they be collected by the community provider? VA copays will be billed by VA after the appointment. If you currently pay VA copayments you will be subject to the same copayment requirements under the Choice Program. Your VA copay will be determined by VA after the care is provided. Video Discussion of the Choice Program On June 25, VA hosted a Google+ Hangout to provide Veterans with information about the Veterans Choice Program which allows eligible Veterans to get health care in the community from non-VA doctors. You can watch a 20-minute recording of the event here:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHzHCPZ4SE4>

At the eight-minute mark, hear an explanation of the “40-mile rule.”

You can click here to get answers to all your questions about the Choice Program, like:

- What if I live in Alaska or Hawaii or New Hampshire?
- If I don't qualify for the Choice Program, are there other options?
- My non-VA doctor is not part of the Choice Program, can he/she join?
Am I responsible for my private insurance deductible if I get care through the Choice Program?

Since the Choice Program went into effect in November of 2014, more than 45,000 medical appointments have been scheduled. •

A World of Opportunities for VA Social Workers

Whether advising on marriage or family problems, counseling those with substance use issues, or helping Veterans to apply for benefits from VA and other government programs, VA social workers play a vital role in helping Veterans, their families, and caregivers to live stable, successful lives. With the increased national focus on ending Veteran homelessness, and a rapidly changing Veteran population, VA needs committed, qualified social workers to care for our Nation's heroes now more than ever.

VA offers social workers a world of opportunities that aren't available in other organizations. VA social workers handle the emotional and economic issues influencing family life during periods of illness and disability. In this role, you have the opportunity to provide direct clinical care and coordinate interest projects while working in an interdisciplinary team to deliver care in the best interest of our nation's heroes.



VA social workers help Veterans with social, emotional, and economic pressing concerns, including community needs of illness and stress. In many cases, you may have the opportunity to provide special services, all with the goal of providing quality care.

team to deliver care in the best interest of our nation's heroes.

Similar to most VA health care positions, social workers are able to practice anywhere in the U.S. within the VA system by maintaining an active license in one state. VA also places importance on work/life balance and offers competitive salaries, and a robust benefits package and retirement plan.

To learn more about Social Work careers at VA, read our [Mental Health Brochure](#). [Hear first-hand](#) from this female Veteran's perspective on the vital role her VA social worker played during her pregnancy. As always, you can explore available positions by location using the interactive map on [VAcareers.va.gov](https://reers.va.gov).

Former Stalag 13 POW Honored at CVVAMC Town Hall Meeting

Greg Swars

Stalag 13 was not a fictional World War II German POW camp created as the setting for the 1970s hit TV series “Hogan’s Heroes,” it was a real place, and Hazlehurst native Jewell Miles was there, a fact acknowledged by the Dublin VA’s honoring of him at its most recent employee town hall meeting.

At each of its bi-monthly employee town hall meetings, the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center honors one of its veterans for their service to the nation during its “Veteran Spotlight” segment as a way of thanking veterans and reminding staff of the importance of VA’s mission to provide personalized, proactive, patient-driven healthcare to America’s heroes. The recognition is made even more poignant and compelling when veterans have a particularly interesting story associated with their service, and few veterans’ service is more interesting than that of Julian Miles, which is why Chaplain David Chaplain Services decided that he would make an excellent candi-

“All of our veterans are heroes to us simply by virtue of their service. There are few more valorous sacrifices than serving our country in the military, especially during combat in a major war, but Mr. Miles’ humility about his service and other accomplishments underscores well why he is an exceptional member of that special generation of veterans from World War II,” Julian said.

Miles, 93, a member of the U.S. Army’s renowned 42nd Infantry, or “Rainbow,” Division created by Douglas MacArthur during World War II, was captured in December 1944 shortly after the Battle of the Bulge while his unit was attempting to ford the Rhine River in Germany. He was subsequently marched with his fellow soldiers to a train that carried them to the infamous Stalag 13 near Hammelburg, Germany, one of many camps maintained by the Nazis to house prisoners of wars.

After a three-day journey without food or water, except for the snow that melted through the wooden slats of the train car in which he was confined, Miles was incarcerated for nearly six months. Often starving, at one point, Miles and a fellow Georgia POW captured a rabbit for a meal. Finally, Miles and his comrades were liberated during a daring raid ordered by General George Patton.

After his release at the end of the War, Miles returned home and founded Precision Products in Dalton and enjoyed great success selling rifle stocks made by robot to Remington Arms. He later married and had four children, 13 grandchildren, and 23 great-grandchildren. In the late 1980s, Miles was re-presented with his military service medals by the Army in a special ceremony after the originals had been lost in a house fire. The medals included one for having been a POW, but the one of which he was most proud was the Army Good Conduct Medal. In an interview at the time, he explained that he cherished the medal over the others because good conduct is “what makes a good soldier.”

During the Dublin VA’s most recent town hall meeting, Julian made a brief presentation to VA staff describing Miles’ service and his successes in private life. Afterward, medical center director Maryalice Morro and those in attendance, including many of his fellow veterans, gave Miles, who attended with his wife



Marguerite, a standing ovation, thanking him for his service and for his post-military accomplishments.

When asked by the medical center's communications chief, Dr. Frank Jordan, if using his image for a story was permissible, Miles agreed, as long as he did not have to be on video or make any statements. Julian was not surprised by Miles' request.

"One of the things that we see with veterans from the World War II-era is their humility. They see their service as simply their duty and not worthy of special attention. Most of us see things differently, of course. If Jewell Miles isn't a hero, who is? Ultimately, his military service and his successful life after his service say all that needs to be said about this brave man," Julian concluded. •



Carl Vinson VA Medical Center's Employee Association

Benefiting Veteran recreational activities and sponsorship to the
Veteran's National Games



Riverview Golf Course

Saturday, November 7, 2015

For more information or to register please contact Dennis Delinski at 478-595-7551 or
Cesci Jones at 478-277-2728

HONORING SERVICE
EMPOWERING
HEALTH

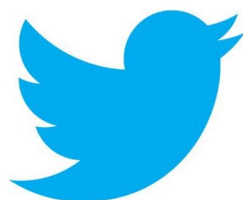
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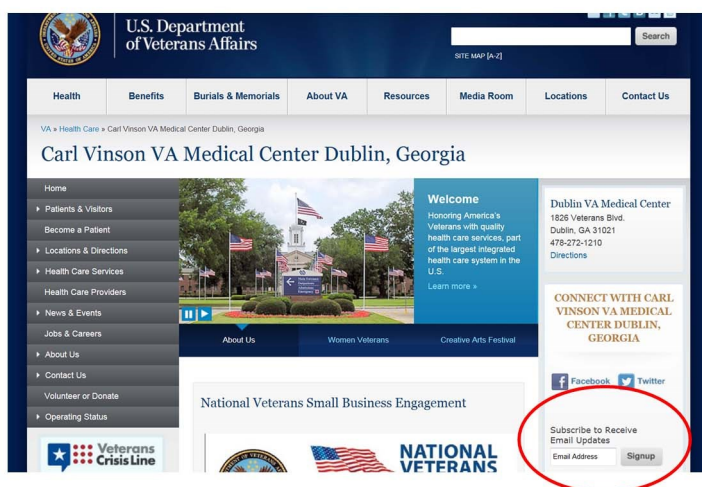
We're committed to communicating effectively with our Veterans and other stakeholders, and the Internet and social media are a few of the ways that we do that. Our Internet and Twitter sites and our Facebook page offer news, events, stories, historical tidbits, and other useful information to keep you informed of what's happening in VA and our medical center.



To find us on the Internet, just search for "Dublin VA Medical Center" or go directly to www.dublin.va.gov. Our Facebook page is available by searching for "Dublin VA Medical Center" as is our Twitter site.



Once you access us on Facebook and Twitter, be sure to follow us and "like" what you see, and on our Internet site opening page, look to the right and enter your email address, then confirm it, and you will receive automatic updates when we post new info.



Once you have joined us on the Internet and our social media pages, refer us to other Veterans and Veteran supporters and anyone with an interest in Veterans' needs. The more we share this important information, the more Veterans we will reach and serve. With all of our communications, the best way to get the word out is still through word of mouth from other Veterans and their supporters, so help us get the info out there!

If you have any questions or need any assistance with getting on our Internet site or social media, just contact Dr. Frank G. Jordan Jr. at Frank.Jordan@va.gov or at 478-274-5440, and be sure to share your suggestions about how we can communicate more effectively with our Veterans and other stakeholders.

Thank you in advance for helping us get out the word about VA programs and services, and thank you for serving our great nation!

Alanson Bryan: The Sailing Surgeon

Scott Thompson

When Captain A. L. Bryan came to Dublin on Maundy Thursday in April 1944, he was on a mission. During his naval career, Bryan had sailed all but three of the seven seas. There was still a war raging in Europe and the Pacific. It would be two more months before the Allied armies would invade the Normandy coast. Captain Bryan was ordered to report to Dublin, Georgia to establish a naval hospital, a large facility situated more than one hundred miles from the nearest ocean. It would be a hospital to treat the flood of expected casualties of a war which seemingly had no end. This is his story.

Born on April 4, 1892 in the tiny East Iowa farming community of Dixon, Alanson Leroy Bryan was a son of telegraph operator and his Norwegian bride Lindsey Bryan and his Norwegian bride Mary. Before his twin sister the age of moved north nesota on the er above Min-

At the four, Alanson ed from the medical derbilt Uni- 1916. Dr. his internship ed States Service fol- gradua- dent Wood- was consider- gress for a war in Eu- entered the



graph operator and his Norwegian bride

Alanson and Alice reached ten, his family to Anoka, Minnesota on the Mississippi River.

age of twenty- Bryan graduated from a prestigious school at Vanderbilt University in 1916. Bryan began with the United States Public Health Service following his graduation. As President Woodrow Wilson was asking for a declaration of war, Bryan entered the United States

Navy when he was commissioned a Lieutenant Junior Grade in the Naval Reserve on February 1, 1917.

Following the entrance of the United States into World War I, Lt. Bryan traveled to the nation's capital where he entered the Navy's Medical School and was commissioned a Lieutenant Junior Grade in the regular Navy.

Lt. Bryan's first assignment came in Boston, Massachusetts to serve as a lieutenant aboard the USS Vestal and the USS Supply, an 1873 iron steamer, until the summer of 1919. As a first lieutenant, Bryan served the next three years aboard the U.S.S. Fulton and the U.S.S. Eagle.

Bryan returned to shore duty taking courses at a New York University and serving at a Boston hospital from 1922 to 1924. Around Christmas, Bryan reported for duty to oversee the fitting of the U.S.S. Memphis, a light cruiser which sailed both the Atlantic and Pacific during Bryan's 14-month stint. After eight months aboard the USS Procyon, Bryan received his first assignment in a hospital, the Navy's premier hospital in San Diego, California, where he served until the fall of 1930.

After a nine-month stint aboard the USS Chaumont and the USS Medina, Commander Bryan, trained in eye, ear, nose and throat surgery and specialized as a general surgeon, began to settle down to shore duty at Mare Island, The Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor and back to San Diego where he served until the end of the 1930s. The commander returned to Pearl Harbor as the tumultuous decade of the 1940s began to serve aboard the U.S.S. Maryland. Bryan was reassigned stateside in the spring of 1941, but the Maryland remained at her base, where she was severely damaged on December 7, 1941.

Commander Bryan's first experience in establishing a naval hospital from the ground up came in Jacksonville, Florida, where he served as the Chief of Surgical Service during the hospital's first six months of operation.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Bryan's skills and expertise were needed to assist the Navy in converting older ships into virtual sailing hospitals. Bryan worked aboard the French ship Normandy, which was converted to the U.S.S. Lafayette. Working with Bethlehem Steel, Captain Bryan oversaw the construction of the U.S.S. Massachusetts, a Dakota Class battleship, which was engaged in the Battle of Casablanca in November 1942.

From December 5, 1942 until March 6, 1944, Bryan, a slender, sandy-haired, sailing surgeon, served as Senior Medical Officer of the U.S.S. Relief, a Atlantic Fleet based in Charleston, South Carolina. In the winter of 1943, the Relief set sail for Boston in preparation for the duty in the engagements around the Solomon, Gilbert and Marshall Islands, including Tarawa and Kwajalein.

Dr. Bryan's staff of surgeons, nurses and orderlies took on the unenviable task of treating massive numbers of Marines many of whom had been gravely battered on the beaches of the paradise islands of the South Pacific as the island hopping campaign slowly began its deadly swing toward their main destination of the island of Japan.

Captain Bryan left the horrific fighting in the South Pacific for a new and completely different assignment. His mission was to travel to rural east-central Georgia to serve as the Navy's Prospective Officer in Command of its new hospital in Dublin, Georgia.

When Captain Bryan arrived in Dublin, he brought with him his wife, the former Margaret Grady of New York and his daughter Mary Anne, who enrolled in Dublin High School. His sons were following in his footsteps. John Dennis was serving as an ensign in the South Pacific and Alanson, Jr. who was serving a surgeon in the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. The Bryans lived in spacious brick home on the hospital grounds. Bryan and his wife immediately became involved in the community affairs of Dublin. Captain Bryan joined the Rotary Club.

Bryan's red-letter day came on a rainy Monday, January 22, 1945 with the dedication of the \$10,000,000.00 dollar Naval Hospital. Bryan worked closely with Commander Louis Dozier, in charge of the building of the hospital, the contractor Beers Construction Company and his executive officer, Commander A.J. Delaney.



During his early months in the completed hospital, Captain Bryan arranged for the visits of Helen Keller and World War I ace Eddie Rickenbacker to the hospital to help raise the spirits of the patients at the hospitals. Bryan was also instrumental in convincing some of the country's greatest bands to stop by the hospital during their cross country travels to play unscheduled performances for his patients.

Within four years of his departure from the Naval Hospital, Captain Bryan died on October 5, 1950 at the Naval Hospital in San Diego, where he has spent many years during his thirty plus year career in the Navy. He is buried in Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, some 2300 miles down the road from where he oversaw the establishment of Dublin Naval Hospital. •

Mr. Thompson's blog, Pieces of Our Past, is available at:
<http://dublinlaurenscountygeorgia.blogspot.com/?m=1>

STRIVE *for a* HEALTHY WEIGHT

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Patient Care Services
Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

For general health, aim for:

- at least 2.5 hours (150 minutes) each week of **moderate-intensity** physical activity, *or*
- 75 minutes each week of **vigorous-intensity** physical activity

To maintain weight, increase physical activity to:

- 5 hours (300 minutes) each week of **moderate-intensity** physical activity, *or*
- 2.5 hours (150 minutes) each week of **vigorous-intensity** physical activity, *or*
- equivalent combination of both



www.move.va.gov

Vietnam Veteran Overcomes PTSD to Become CVVAMC “Volunteer Extraordinaire”

Dr. Frank G. Jordan Jr, FACHE

When Gus Allbritton was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1969 immediately after high school, he didn't know what to expect. The Vietnam War was raging and the U.S. Army was at the forefront of hostilities, so getting shipped out to Southeast Asia did not surprise Allbritton, but making service a lifelong commitment was certainly not in his mind once he returned from service.

“I was scared to death!” Allbritton laughed during a recent interview. “I didn't know where Vietnam was or what to expect, I just knew that the Army told me to go and I went.”

Originally from Dade City, Fla., Allbritton served in the Army until 1971 with the 2nd Battalion 503rd Infantry Regiment, gade Combat Vietnam (IFFE), and Infantry Regiment. received three Pur-Infantry Badge, Vi-lantry, Vietnam Ser-Campaign Medal, fense Ribbon.

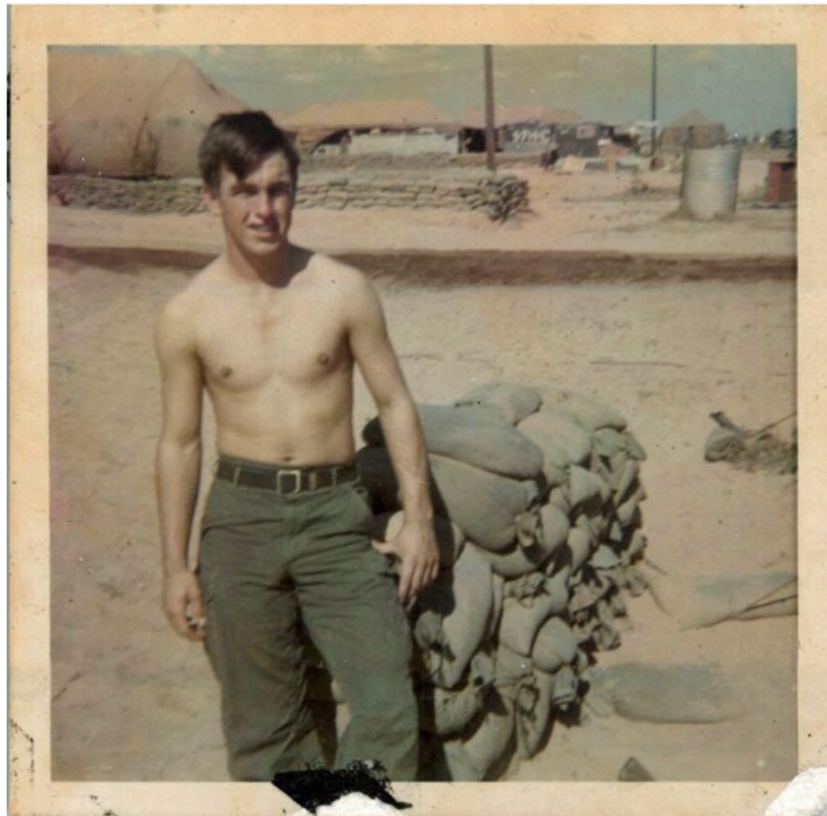
After his mili-britton returned to tried to put the War a variety of jobs, in-County, Florida dep-bailiff, and bail bounty hunter, he earned a bachelor's versity of Florida. realized that his in Vietnam, and the that they engen-ignored forever.

“A lot of times I couldn't sleep. Memories would come flooding in and I would find myself reliving things that I had never wanted to think about again. I wanted to get back to the business of living a regular life, but I was having trouble doing it,” Allbritton admitted. Ultimately, he did something that he never thought he would do. He went to the VA.

“I didn't know much about the VA but what I knew wasn't good. I heard all of the horror stories and decided right out of the service that I didn't want to go to the VA for help.”

What Allbritton did not know at the time was that he was suffering with something that was not going to go away and that was adversely affecting his efforts to resume civilian life. It was only after visiting the VA that he learned about post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

“I had heard of shellshock and knew a little about what it meant,” Allbritton said, “but I didn't really understand the extent of what the condition could do to a person's life. I had never heard of PTSD or what



173rd Airborne Bri-Team, 1st Field Force the 1st Battalion 50th Highly decorated, he ple Hearts, a Combat etnam Cross of Gal-vice Medal, Vietnam and a National de-

tary service, All-Florida where he behind him. Working cluding as a Pasco uty sheriff and court bondsman and entered college and degree from the Uni-Still, he eventually combat experiences emotional baggage dered, couldn't be

the VA could do to help but I finally went to my local VA and found out about it, which was one of the smartest decisions I ever made. It saved my life.”

After going to the VA and getting counseling and attending classes that taught coping skills and educated him about PTSD, Allbritton went from barely making it through the day in some cases to getting back into the social mainstream. Before he realized it, he was interacting with the VA in ways that he could never have imagined.

“I went from being reluctant to being treated at the VA to joining the team as a volunteer. If someone had told me when I got back from Vietnam that I would spend a large part of my life volunteering with the VA, I might have said something crude and would have at least told them that they were greatly mistaken,” Allbritton says with a smile. “Man, was I wrong.

Allbritton started volunteering with the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center in Dublin in 1991 after then-medical center director Bill Edgar asked him to assist in finding other veterans needing help with Combat Veterans group, and has never

“I started volunteering because I realized fellow veterans what I wanted to be a part of what was available to me in a way of continuing to

“We call Mr. ‘volunteer extraordinaire’ Voluntary Service

“We have categories of volunteer hours that recognize the generosity of our volunteers. Mr. Allbritton has put in so much time at our medi-

cal center that we are going to have to come up with a special category just for him. It’s difficult to express just what a debt of gratitude we owe him. He’s here to help us with situations that we often aren’t sure how to handle. Gus is truly a member of the Dublin VA team.”

Involved in a variety of activities at the medical center, Allbritton serves on 17 committees and work groups, and is often sought out by VA management and staff for his opinion about how the VA is doing and how it can do better. He currently has over 20,000 hours as a volunteer with VA.

When the number of activities that Allbritton is involved in is considered, one wonders where he gets the time. In addition to helping at the medical center, Allbritton often travels on VA’s behalf, assisting with events such as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, speaking at veterans’ forums, and participating in training. He is a member of veterans’ service organizations like the VFW, American Legion, DAV, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart, yet still finds time to take veterans to recreational events like football games and on shopping trips. A regular at VA events like the Dublin VA’s semi-annual memorial service and Memorial Day and Veterans Day programs, he often drives veterans to medical appointments and other locations on weekends and evenings. In his “spare” time, Allbritton likes to sing and play guitar with his son Richard and take long walks.

It has been a long time since the young Army veteran left Vietnam and combat behind to try to get back to the business of living only to encounter difficulties that he could not have anticipated, but the way Allbritton sees it, things could not have worked out better.



Allbritton flashes the smile that lets him connect with other Veterans like Von Williams

tor Bill Edgar asked ing other veterans PTSD. He joined the Group, a PTSD support looked back.

unteering with the VA that it could do for my it had done for me and of helping them realize them. For me, it was a serve,” Allbritton said.

Allbritton our naire’,” said Dublin VA Chief Dean Swan.

egories of volunteer the generosity of our britton has put in so cal center that we are

"I came back looking for one life and ended up finding another. Volunteering has become a way of life for me. If I'm not volunteering with VA, I'm working with my church. I see volunteering as a ministry for me. Not only does volunteering with VA allow me to give back to my fellow veterans, it helps me to feel like I'm still serving my country," Allbritton said.

"Service is my life, and what I do at VA allows me to serve my country, my community, and my fellow veterans. Looking back on my time in Vietnam, I now see very clearly what I was fighting for. I ended up having a good life after all."•


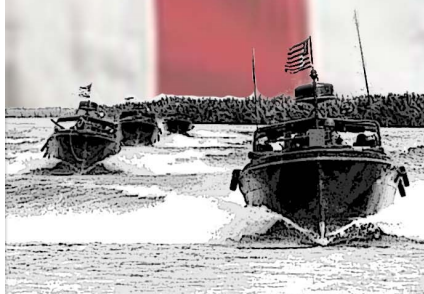
Welcome Home for

VIETNAM VETERANS

Carl Vinson VA Medical Center

Sept. 19, 2015, 2:00 - 4:00 PM

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
VIETNAM WAR
50th
SERVICE • VALOR • SACRIFICE
COMMEMORATION



CVVAMC Gets New Chief of Staff

The Carl Vinson VA Medical Center recently announced that it has a new Chief of Staff.

Dr. Christopher D. Blasy will take the helm of the medical center's clinical operations in September. A doctor of osteopathic medicine and a family physician with leadership experience in private practice, military medicine, and the Veteran's Health Administration, Dr. Blasy is a 1989 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy and served six years on active duty as an engineer prior to attending medical school at Michigan State University. He completed his residency in Family Medicine at Georgetown University in 2002 and established a solo family medicine practice in suburban Maryland.

Upon leaving Washington, D.C., Blasy moved to Hinesville, Ga., in 2005 where he established a private practice serving the local community. In 2010, he moved from private practice to become a Warrior Transition physician for the Ft. Stewart Warrior Transition Battalion. In that position he cared for wounded and injured active-duty, National Guard, and Army Reserve soldiers re-

turning from overseas. After two years in that role, he became the medical director for the Tuttle Army Health Clinic at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah caring for soldiers, airmen, marines, and sailors as well as their family members and retirees. Blasy joined the VA as the Associate Chief of Staff for Primary Care at the Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center in Saginaw in June 2014 and became the Chief of Staff there in October 2014. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians and Diplomate of the American Board of Family Medicine. Married with one son, in his spare time Blasy enjoys outdoor recreational activities, college football, and spending time with his family.

As the Chief of Staff for the Dublin VA, Dr. Blasy will be responsible for all clinical operations and will answer directly to Medical Center Director, Maryalice Morro. Ms. Morro is enthusiastic about Blasy joining the medical center's leadership team, noting that he is well qualified and utterly dedicated to veterans' healthcare needs. She said that his highest priority will be helping the Medical Center improve primary care access.

"We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Blasy to Dublin and the Carl Vinson VAMC. He will be a tremendous asset to us as we continue to improve the experience of care for our veterans," Morro said. •



Dr. Chris Blasy

CVVAMC Honors Escort Program

The Carl Vinson VA Medical Center announced recently that it has inaugurated an Honors Escort program to ensure that veterans who die while at the medical center receive a final escort that honors their service to the nation.

When a veteran dies at the Dublin VA, a team made up of VA staff and community volunteers forms to drape the veteran in a U.S. flag and escort the veteran. Members of the team who are veterans themselves wear a vest with their respective service emblem on it. Attended with solemnity and the utmost respect for the veteran and their families, the Honors Escort team walks with the veteran to demonstrate the appreciation of a grateful nation for the veteran's military service.

At a recent practice session for the program, medical center director Maryalice Morro reminded team members of the profound importance of what they would be doing with the program and thanked them for volunteering.

"This brings closure and respect for the veteran's VA family that this veteran her final days. I the commitment- ingness of our who have ticipate in this program,"

Mem- Honors Escort training in how the escort primary trainers Nesmith, a U.S. Air Force veteran Army veteran McNeal, who

tional training in Reno, Nev., for facility-level coordinators of the program.

"To honor fellow veterans is a way to show respect for their service. Working with the VA, I spend a lot of time with our veterans, so this program allows me to stay in contact with them until the end," said Nesmith, who was on an Army burial detail while on active duty. "Our veterans deserve absolute respect at all times, most especially once they have passed away."

The Honors Escort Program is a VA initiative to show respect for veterans who die while at VA facilities. Part of an end-of-life protocol, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has recommended that the program be implemented throughout the VA in order to provide a way for staff and others to pay respect to veterans for their service to the nation and to honor their lives and memories at the time of their deaths. The program is also intended to affirm for veterans' families the high regard and reverence that VA has for their loved ones and the service of all veterans.

Anyone interested in volunteering for the Honors Escort program should contact Voluntary Service Chief Dean Swan at Aldean.Swan@va.gov or at 4798-272-1210 ext. 2729. •



program with dignity the veteran, family, and the has cared for during his or am grateful for ment and will- volunteers agreed to par- very important Morro said. bers of the team receive to complete cess from pri- Sarah Army and U.S. eran, and U.S. James "Calvin" attended a na-



CVVAMC Radiology Staff Preserves History

Radiology staff at the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center recently preserved some of the medical center's history by placing items in a time capsule.

Before digital technology, a metal X-ray box was used to pass film from the medical center's X-ray room into its development room. During recent construction, the old X-ray box was going to be sealed up, so, according to Radiology supervisor Charles Collins, his staff decided to take advantage of the opportunity to preserve some of their history by making the box a time capsule.

"Radiology staff members have dedicated many years of service to veterans and are proud of the work that was an excellent piece of represents so derful people place in the whole time capsule one will have ging this out one day!" Col-

Staff items for the that included recent issue *Courier*-2015 Joint National Pa-Goals Card, items, a flyer cal center's and an enve-rent postage ers. Medical tor Maryalice mitted a med-coin and her In recognition

portance of the moment, the last item included was a signed photo of the current Radiology staff.

Dr. Frank Jordan, communications director at the Dublin VA, said that an engraved placard will be placed on the spot to commemorate the event.

"Our medical center has 67 years of history associated with it and our veterans represent living history, which is why we often say 'history lives here.' The Americans that we serve actually lived through the historical events that we see depicted in the books, movies, TV shows, and video games that are so popular. By honoring our history and the veterans who lived it, we honor their service. When I heard that our Radiology staff had come up with the time capsule idea, I was very proud. It shows their commitment to their veterans and their history," Jordan said. •



they do. This lent oppor-behind a tan-history that many won-at a specific time. Besides, idea behind a is fun. Some-a blast dig-of the wall lins said. submitted time capsule a copy of a of the Dublin *Herald*, a Commission tient Safety radiology for the medi-retail store, lope with cur-among oth-center direc-Morro sub-ical center business card. of the im-



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

1 QUESTION

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iPads Help CVVAMC Veterans Stay in Touch

Veterans at the Dublin VA are keeping in better contact with family, friends, and loved ones thanks to modern technology.

Some veterans at the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center are finding it easier to communicate with family and friends these days thanks to the availability of iPads purchased with funds donated by the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century. The iPads communication program, the first of its kind in VA, allows veterans to visit with others via Skype, FaceTime, and other communications media, assistance that medical center social worker Greg Senters emphasizes is indispensable for patients with reduced mobility or with family living in other areas.

"Many of our veterans are no longer able to travel to see family and friends due to limited mobility or just the great distances involved, so the iPad program offers them an enhanced connection with the world. The video function also allows for patients with speech difficulties to communicate with people more effectively and makes the experience more personal than a simple phone call might be," Senters said.

Senters, who coordinated the unique program for the Dublin VA, thanked the Society Colonial Dames XVII Century for the generous donation that allowed the medical center to buy the iPads needed to make the program work.

"Our partners are essential for our success in caring for veterans and the Colonial Dames of the 17th Century was pivotal in this case. We are especially appreciative of the efforts of Ms. Harriet Claxton of the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century for her support," Senters said.



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Devoted to preserving the memory of those who settled in the U.S. prior to 1701, the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century is an organization of women who are lineal descendants of an ancestor who lived and served in one of the original American colonies prior to 1701 in the geographical area of the current United States.

Claxton, a longtime supporter of the Dublin VA who regularly presents at the medical center's Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and other programs, was thrilled that the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century was able to assist.

"The Colonial Dames of the 17th Century works closely with VA hospitals across the State to help them meet needs that veterans may have. Sometimes we host receptions, other times we provide magazines, but in all cases we like to do something tangible to make veterans' lives a little easier. In this case, helping veterans by incorporating modern technology was especially gratifying," Claxton said.

A career social worker who has worked for the State of Georgia and has been with the VA for seven years, Senters noted how the program enhances the lives of veterans at his medical center.



CVVAMC social workers Greg Senters (left), who shepherded the iPad program, and Kim Kralicky (far right), accept iPad donation from Harriet Claxton of the National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century

“By using technology, we can help them stay in touch with grandchildren, spouses, children, or other important people in their lives. Many of our veterans become reflective about life when they are with us and want to ensure that relationships with family and other loved ones are sound. We may not be able to add to the quantity of their days in some cases, but we can surely influence their quality,” Senters said. He also explained how the program benefits VA staff.

“Seeing the faces of these veterans and their families light up or a tear of joy when they interact is one of the most satisfying feelings that I have experienced as a social worker. For a moment, the world is right again for that patient and his loved ones and this technology makes it possible. We are making memories for veterans and their families,” he added.

Al Nesmith, who recently used the program to visit with his 94-year-old World War II veteran father, thanked the VA for implementing the innovative program.

“This is a really nice thing that the VA is doing. It was good to see my daddy and get to talk to him,” Nesmith said.

Anyone wanting to learn more about the program can contact Greg Senters at 478-272-1210 ext. 2374 or Gregory.Senters@va.gov. Information about donations or volunteering at the medical center can be obtained by calling 478-272-1210 ext. 2729. •

VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM



VA | U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

The Veterans Choice Program provides eligible Veterans the option to receive VA Community Care from approved providers in their communities.

Am I eligible?



Have you been told by your local VA medical facility that they can't schedule your appointment **within 30 days** of the clinically indicated date or if no such date can be determined, your preferred date?



Is your current residence **more than 40 miles** from the closest VA medical facility?



Do you need to travel by air, boat or ferry to the VA medical facility closest to your home?



Do you face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to a VA medical facility based on the presence of a body of water or a geologic formation that cannot be crossed by road?

If you were enrolled in VA Health care on or before Aug 1, 2014 or you are eligible to enroll as a combat Veteran, and answered

"YES"

to any of the questions, you may be eligible!

How do I set up an appointment?

Call:
866-606-8198

1

Gather your information about any other health insurance coverage you may have (e.g., employer, union-based health plans)



2

Call 1-866-606-8198 to make sure you qualify + schedule an appointment. When you call, we will walk you through the following steps:

- You will be asked to enter your ZIP code, and first and last name.
- We will check to make sure you are eligible for this program.
- We will check which of your needs are covered by the VA.
- You will be asked for your address and the name of your preferred VA Community Care. Unfortunately, not all providers will be eligible to participate so if your preferred provider is not available, we will recommend other providers in your area.



3

We will then work with you to schedule an appointment.



This hotline is exclusively for making sure you are eligible for the Choice Program and setting up a VA Community Care appointment. If you have questions about other aspects of your VA medical care or want to learn more about enrolling in VA health services, please visit www.va.gov/health.

